



Linguistic Imperialism and Discourse Colonialism in Pakistani English Medium Education Policy: A Critical Postcolonial Discourse Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to explore the linguistic imperialism and discourse colonialism in Pakistani English-medium instruction (EMI) education policy using Critical Postcolonial Discourse Analysis (CPCDA). The study is based on colonial linguistic discourse in Pakistan, which establishes a linguistic hierarchy and ideology from a Postcolonial perspective. The study employed a qualitative interpretivist paradigm based on the theory of Linguistic Imperialism (Phillipson) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough) with a post-colonial approach as proposed by Bhabha, Fairclough, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin. The documents analysed were official policy texts of national and provincial EMI policies, which were collected through a documentation procedure that involved a population of twelve ($N = 12$) national and provincial EMI policy documents from 2009 to 2025. Considering the National Education Policy 2009, the National Education Policy 2017-2025, and the Single National Curriculum 2020-21, six ($n = 6$) documents were selected using purposive, criterion-based sampling. The results showed the presence of five repetitive codes of discourse: 'globalist legitimization,' 'functional bifurcation,' 'implementation erasure,' 'colonial residue naming,' and 'elite/mass stratification,' and that colonial genealogy was always undermentioned throughout the corpus. The results reveal that the policy discourse of Pakistani EMI is reproducing the linguistic hierarchy through naturalisation and omission instead of assertion, thereby extending the linguistic imperialism theory to a finer-grained level to analyse the national policy.



Introduction

Language has never been a neutral medium of instruction in postcolonial societies; it is rather a mechanism which reproduces colonial power structures long after the formal empire of the colonists has ceased to exist. In South Asia, the British colonial regime put in place the language of governance and elite mobility, which left behind enduring language hierarchies and political rankings of the region (Rahman, 1996). Said (1994) also sees language policy as the continuation of imperial cultural power even after the cessation of direct colonial power, and Saigol (1993) locates Pakistani education as a place where these colonial ideologies remain alive.

Postcolonial theorists say that linguistic dominance is not done by violence but is more subtle and discursive. Bhabha's (2019) theorisation of cultural hybridity and ambivalence further undermines any easy dichotomous conception of colonizer/colonised, and Ashcroft et al. (2022) provide the reader with some tools for the reading of the ways that formerly colonised institutions "write back" against imposed linguistic norms. The analytical tool used in this study is the critical discourse analysis of Fairclough (2020), extended from his earlier work with Chouliaraki (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999), which views language as intertwined with ideology and social power.

This is a short video of 1.3 English-Medium Instruction and Discourse Colonialism in Pakistan.

In Kachru's (1986) World Englishes framework, English is an imbalanced language machine; 'Outer Circle' English speakers like those in Pakistan should get basic education in their own language instead of a 'foreign' one. Similarly, Pakistani scholarship reveals that English in post-colonial contexts is a tool of epistemic and linguistic imperialism, and that there is an inverse correlation between exposure to EMI and academic performance (Hassan, 2024, quoted in Zaman & Khan, 2025); that EMI without pedagogical support further deepens the differences between the urban/private and the rural/public (Ali & Khan, 2023, quoted in Zaman & Khan, 2025). This is explicit in postcolonial theory, where EMI policy is analyzed as a language imperialism landscape (Raza & Mahmood, 2024, as cited in Zaman & Khan, 2025); and more broadly at regional level, where language loss of the heritage languages is still considerable in postcolonial countries like Pakistan and Bangladesh (Kalyanpur et al., 2023, as cited in Global Ed Leadership, 2024).

Statement of the Problem

Despite the growing awareness of the role of English in an ideological context, the discourse of EMI policy in Pakistan is still studied predominantly from pedagogical and/or economic perspectives, and few critical postcolonial approaches have been used to analyse the discourses of the EMI policy texts themselves. That is what this study aims to do.

Research Objectives

1. To examine how Pakistani EMI policy discourse constructs linguistic hierarchies.
2. To analyze postcolonial ideological patterns embedded in EMI policy texts.

Research Questions

1. How does EMI policy discourse construct linguistic hierarchies in Pakistan?

2. What postcolonial ideological patterns underlie Pakistani EMI policy texts?

Limitations of the Study

The study is limited in scope as it does not include classroom implementation, students' perceptions, and the variance in educational policies in different regions and time periods, which stifles the extent of generalizability across the broad movement of educational policy in Pakistan.

Literature Review

Theoretical Foundations: Linguistic Imperialism and Postcolonial Discourse

The theoretical underpinning of this study is based on the view of linguistic imperialism as conceptualised by Phillipson (1992), in which the spread of the English language is viewed as being connected to colonial power structures. Kachru (1986) differentiates between an "Outer Circle" of postcolonial countries in which English "entails linguistic power unevenly," such as in the case of Pakistan. The binary colonizer–colonised framings are destabilised by Bhabha (2019), and Ashcroft et al. (2022) provide means for reading the resistance patterns of institutions to imposed linguistic norms. Building on this earlier work, Fairclough (2020) expands this view of language to include its entanglements with ideology and power, and to discourse in late modernity, the work of Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999).

Colonial legacies and elite language policy in Pakistan.

Along with Said (1994) and Saigol (1993), Rahman (1996) explains how linguistic policies of colonial rule are still in operation today, as English is used by the elite and Urdu becomes the national language, which enables the elite to move up in socio-economic status.

Caste and Social Class in the USA

Persistent trends and challenges in the English-language education system in Pakistan are discussed by Shamim (2008), and an "English-medium fever" is described from an additive bi/multilingual perspective by Manan et al. (2015), and access and equity issues in the higher education system are identified by Mansoor (2005). Channa et al. (2025) analysed the government primary teachers' appropriation of the Single National Curriculum EMI policy in Balochistan.

Discourse Colonialism and Recent Critical Turns

The study by Zaman and Khan (2025) challenges the neutral perspective that is attached to English as a global language, stating that there is a correlation between EMI exposure and a decrease in academic performance (Hassan, 2024), and that urban–rural gaps are being widened as a result of EMI exposure when pedagogical support is missing (Ali & Khan, 2023). Raza and Mahmood (2024) directly use postcolonial theory in the evaluation of Pakistani EMI policy.

Research Gaps

1. Although there is some documentation of stratification results, there is limited systematic linguistic analysis of these stratifications as they are discursively constructed in policy texts.

2. There is a wide application of postcolonial theory in Pakistani education but not many studies consider specific discursive strategies that carry colonial ideology in official EMI policy documents.

Research Methodology

This research is carried out based on a critical paradigm and interpretivist approach, rooted in social construction, because policy texts do not just reflect educational reality, but actually create linguistic hierarchies and ideologies (Fairclough, 2020). Here, 'reality' is seen as discursively produced and not as an objective fact, following the postcolonial principle that language is a tool of power rather than a neutral tool (Phillipson, 1992). This is a suitable paradigm because the goals of the study involve discovery of meaning that is embedded, not a measurement of observable variables.

The philosophy of the research is qualitative and interpretative and does not assume value-free research as in the positivist approach. The researcher's interpretive stance recognizes discourse as a product of historical and social context, and as carrying implications for social power, in line with Fairclough's (2020) perspective on discourse as an inseparable combination of ideology and social power, and in accordance with Said's (1994) notion of cultural and linguistic authority that extends beyond official colonial rule.

The research approach is a qualitative document analysis technique as a research method, applying critical discourse analysis (CDA) by Fairclough (2020; Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999), which focuses on the text, discursive practice, and social practice. This approach is then used alongside Postcolonial Critical Discourse Analysis (PCDA), which incorporates Bhabha's (2019) notion of hybridity and Ashcroft et al.'s (2022) postcolonial reading strategies to help to elucidate the language and linguistic encoding of colonial ideology within policy texts.

The data analysis is based on two integrated theoretical lenses: Fairclough's CDA (Fairclough, 2020), which focuses on vocabulary, grammar and textual structure to identify ideology; and Linguistic Imperialism theory (Phillipson, 1992) which explains these linguistic choices as strategies for the exercise of hegemonic power. These frameworks enable systematic encoding of lexical hierarchies (such as 'modern' versus 'vernacular'), pattern of agency and legitimization strategies in the context of policy discourse.

The collection of data is of documentary nature, which includes purposively selected official Pakistani education policy documents from federal and provincial sources. No interviews or surveys because the aims are related to the construction of text, not the perception of stakeholders.

The population comprised all the national and provincial English-medium instruction (EMI) policy documents published in Pakistan during the period between 2009 to 2025 (N = 12): National Education Policy (2009) (Government of Pakistan, 2009), National Education Policy (2017–25), Single National Curriculum 2020–21 (Channa et al., 2025) and provincial school education policies of Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan.

To select six (n = 6) documents that address medium-of-instruction provisions, a purposive (criterion-based) sampling method was adopted. This results in a sample-to-population ratio of

50% which is considered large enough for in-depth qualitative textual saturation (Fairclough, 2020).

Data Analysis

Introduction to the Analytical Approach

This chapter applies the analytical framework of two types of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) models that were introduced in the Methodology chapter: Fairclough's (2020) three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model, which has three levels (the textual, discursive practice and social practice levels), and Postcolonial Critical Discourse Analysis (PCDA), which is based on the concept of hybridity of Bhabha (2019) and the postcolonial reading strategies of Ashcroft et al. (2022). The theory of Linguistic Imperialism provided by Phillipson (1992) provides the interpretive lens for reading the linguistic choices that are identified at the textual level as mechanisms of hegemonic dominance at the social practice level.

Analysis is undertaken inductively and deductively at the same time – codes were generated from patterns identified in the sampled texts and the theoretical framework also allowed for codes to be generated (such as 'lexical hierarchy' and 'agency deletion'). Wherever possible, verbatim extracts of primary policy texts which were available and can be independently verified are included as 'samples' in double inverted commas. Where the precise wording of a particular document could not be reproduced without resorting to the document itself, the analysis is based upon the consistent characterisation of the provisions of that document in the body of peer-reviewed secondary literature available and thematic labels appear in single inverted commas to separate the coded category from verbatim quotation from the document. This distinction is retained throughout to ensure analytical transparency.

Textual-Level Analysis: Lexical and Grammatical Construction of Linguistic Hierarchy

Fairclough's (2020) model at the textual level focuses on the micro-linguistic features of the text in which ideology is manifested, such as vocabulary, transitivity, and modality. The National Education Policy 2009 (Government of Pakistan, 2009) is a clear example to illustrate. English is the international language and is of significance in the competitive world in a globalized world order" (Government of Pakistan, 2009). There are some textual features which are analytically significant here. First, the language of "international" and "globalised" marks English as unmarked and modern, as discourse in the 'globalist legitimization' strategy. Second, the copular construction ("is... important for competition") frames the necessity of English as a self-evident rather than a policy choice, ruling out other framings. This can be seen as an example of what Phillipson (1992) argues is an aspect of linguistic imperialism - the naturalisation of English as an intrinsically and inevitably valuable language which removes the choice of medium of instruction from its political and historical context.

In contrast, the provisions on Urdu and regional languages in the same policy documents are consistently expressed in terms of unity, symbolism, and cohesion, rather than competition or opportunity, such as referring to the role of national language in bringing people together and symbolising integration, instead of providing means for economic or academic progress. (In secondary analysis, Rahman, 1996; Manan et al., 2015) This asymmetry is what the analysis codes as 'functional bifurcation': English is given an instrumental 'outwards' function (global

competition, science, mathematics) and Urdu and regional languages an affective ‘inwards’ function (unity, identity, cohesion). This kind of bifurcation is a classic discursive practice of linguistic imperialism, as English is used in practice for the development while indigenous languages are only used symbolically (Phillipson, 1992; Zaman & Khan, 2025).

The second textual sample is from the notification of conversion of Government schools into English medium schools dated 2009 which was issued by the Government of the Punjab from 1st April 2010 (Government of the Punjab, 2009). The transitivity here is important: the schools are the actors of the conversion, an agent of the institution that would need to implement it pedagogically is anonymous (shall be converted), and the name for teachers, students, and communities, who would have to perform the change, is not included in the clause. This is one of these regular agency erasures, identified throughout the sampled corpus, and is coded as ‘implementation erasure’: in policy texts, the linguistic change at the level of institutional category (the school) is described but not linguistically recognised as being the work of humans. Channa et al. (2025) report that the consequence of this erasure is that the primary teachers, who are the most visible agents of the implementation of Single National Curriculum (SNC) in the province of Balochistan, were not linguistically or institutionally placed as actors in the formulation of the curriculum.

Table 1 below summarises the coding scheme developed from the textual-level analysis, with illustrative sources.

Table 1: Coding Scheme for Textual-Level Discourse Analysis

Code (Theme)	Linguistic Feature	Illustrative Sample/Source	Theoretical Interpretation
'Globalist legitimization'	Lexical pairing with "international," "globalised," "competition"	"English is an international language... important for competition in a globalised world order" (Government of Pakistan, 2009)	Naturalises English dominance as apolitical necessity (Phillipson, 1992)
'Functional bifurcation'	Asymmetric vocabulary: English = opportunity; Urdu = symbolism	NEP 2009 provisions on Urdu as national cohesion symbol (Rahman, 1996)	Reserves instrumental value for English; indigenous languages symbolic only
'Implementation erasure'	Passive/agentless constructions mandating conversion	"Government Schools into English medium schools from 1st April 2010" (Government of the Punjab, 2009)	Deletes teacher/community agency; centralises authority (Fairclough, 2020)
'Colonial residue naming'	Explicit historical framing of English's origin	"[English] was imposed as language of the rulers during the British rule" (cited in Government of Pakistan White Paper, 2007)	Rare textual acknowledgment of colonial legacy, quickly reframed as pragmatic necessity
'Elite/mass stratification'	Distinctions between EMI and non-EMI	SNC dual-track school typology (Channa et al.,	Reproduces class-based access hierarchy (Manan

Discursive Practice Level: Production, Distribution, and Intertextuality

The second dimension of Fairclough's (2020) analysis focuses on the process of the text's creation, dissemination and interpretation. A distinctive feature of the sampled policy corpus is the consistent use of external legitimating authorities in the form of international policy frameworks, specifically the UNESCO agenda for "Education for All" (EFA) agenda as adopted at the year 2000. The sampled policy corpus exhibits a clear intertextual pattern, in which each successive policy document (NEP 2009, the SNC 2020–21 and provincial implementation notifications) makes reference to international policy frameworks, primarily the UNESCO agenda for "Education for All" (EFA) adopted in the year 2000. Secondary analysis suggests that the call for adoption of English as medium of instruction from grade 4 was clearly made by the policymakers as a response to international demands of quality education in Pakistan (Rahman, 2016). This intertextual borrowing is what this study classifies as 'external legitimation transfer': the policy text brings legitimacy from an internationally recognised institution to support a locally contested linguistic decision, thus depoliticising the policy.

The second discursive-practice pattern relates to the processes of policy production and policy appropriation. The findings of Channa et al. (2025) show that SNC-EMI provisions were 'crafted at the top', in the form of federal and provincial curriculum authority level, and had very little consultation with teachers who are later mandated by the provisions to implement them in the classrooms of Balochistan. This top-down production process is discursively legible in the sampled texts themselves in the sense that the texts demonstrate a consistent use of directive, declarative modality (such as "shall be" and "will be taught"), but are not characterized by consultative or conditional modality, as Manan et al. (2015) say is the case in policy that is characterized by a "persistent 'English-medium fever' without regards for implementation capacity. That there were no consultative markers in the text is in line with Fairclough's (2020) observation that the discursive practice reproduces the institutionally dominant power relations in the production of text.

These texts are also subject to a stratified interpretation by their target groups. The implementation challenges of the EMI policy, as identified in the secondary survey and interviews, reveal that elite groups and non-elite groups interpret the policy differently: elite groups (private school) found the policy supportive of their existing linguistic capital while the majority groups (government school) reported language comprehension problem and implementation stress (Zaman & Khan, 2025; Channa et al., 2025). This differential uptake demonstrates Fairclough's (2020) argument that the construction of discursive practice is not a uniform practice across a heterogeneous readership, and also supports Bhabha's (2019) notion of ambivalence; that is, the same policy text is read as an opportunity and as an imposition depending on the reader's prior relationship to English.

Social Practice Level: Ideology and Hegemonic Reproduction

At the highest level of analysis, Fairclough (2020) focuses on the links between discursive patterns and broader social patterns and relations of power. The above textual and discursive patterns, in light of Phillipson's (1992) Linguistic Imperialism theory form a recognisable ideological formation: English as the unmarked language of the modern, competent and globally

connected citizen, while Urdu and regional languages as markers of local identity but not necessarily of opportunity or competence. This formation mimics what Rahman (1996) refers to as a "persistent linguistic hierarchy" that is "carried over from colonial administrative practice" in which English remains "an instrument of elite socio-economic mobility" (Rahman, 1996: 55).

This hegemonic reproduction is analytically different from 'linguistic imperialism' alone. While the structural and institutional advantages which explain the persistence of English (according to Phillipson (1992)), Bhabha's (2019) concept of hybridity helps explain the ambivalent and not simply coercive nature of Pakistani EMI policy discourse. The sampled texts do not merely engage with English; they create a hybridised justification in which English is positioned as not only being acceptable to national identity but one that is also compatible to it; as can be seen by the juxtaposition of English as the means for "competition in a globalised world order" with Urdu as the means for "national cohesion" in the same policy paragraph (Government of Pakistan, 2009). The juxtaposition is a typical postcolonial discursive move as described by Ashcroft et al. (2022): the language of the colonizer is not rejected, nor is it unconditionally taken over, but rather is incorporated into a "hybrid" national discourse that resolves but does not erase the hierarchy of languages.

Cross-Document Thematic Comparison

Each of the six documents was examined to determine the qualitative presence of the five codes identified in Table 1, to see how consistent these discursive patterns are across the selected documents. This assessment is based on the primary text where it exists (NEP 2009; Punjab 2009 notification) and secondary sources where this is not possible (Punjab SNC; provincial school education policy; HEC LIE statement; Balochistan SNC implementation guidance) as per transparency principle mentioned in Section 1.

Table 2: Cross-Document Presence of Discourse Codes

Sampled Document	'Globalist Legitimation'	'Functional Bifurcation'	'Implementation Erasure'	'Colonial Residue Naming'	'Elite/Mass Stratification'
National Education Policy 2009	High	High	Moderate	Low	High
National Education Policy 2017–2025	High	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Moderate
Single National Curriculum 2020–21	Moderate	High	High	Low	High
Punjab School Education Policy	High	Moderate	High	Low	High
HEC Language-in-Education Statement	High	Moderate	Low	Low	Moderate

Balochistan	SNC	Moderate	Moderate	High	Low	Moderate
Implementation Guidance						

The trend that is observed in Table 2 shows two consistent results that relate to the research questions. First, 'globalist legitimation' and 'elite/mass stratification' is found at "high" levels in most of the sampled corpus, revealing that the discursive construction of English as globally necessary is not confined to any particular policy document, but is rather a stable aspect of Pakistani EMI policy discourse in the time span of 2009 to 2025 (answering Research Question 1—how did the policy discourse construct linguistic hierarchies?). Second, across all six documents the naming of 'colonial residue' is either low or completely absent, therefore, the hierarchy which is an active element of the policy texts is not explicitly referred to as 'colonial residues'. It is this omission that is analytically important and that speaks to Research Question 2: postcolonial ideology exists in these texts not in explicit claims but in the form of disavowal and naturalisation, in line with Bhabha's (2019) description of the way colonial discourse works are through disavowal, rather than explicit assertion.

Interpretation through Linguistic Imperialism and Postcolonial Theory

Drawing on the textual, discursive and social practice results, this analysis suggests that EMI policy discourse can be considered as a site of what this study calls discourse colonialism—that is, a way of linguistic dominance that does not rely on harsh, direct methods of control but on the consistent and persistent textual naturalisation of the English language of opportunity, accompanied by the systematic exclusion of the institutional agency needed to make this opportunity equally accessible to all. This finding complements Phillipson's (1992) linguistic imperialism framework, which looks at general observations of the influence of English as a world language, in showing that it is also operational at the level of specific grammatical and lexical elements in the official Pakistani policy texts.

The recurring characteristics of 'functional bifurcation' and 'elite/mass stratification' in the sampled corpus also support the secondary sources' apprehensions of the recurring colonial linguistic stratification in Pakistan's EMI policy (Rahman, 1996; Manan et al., 2015; Zaman & Khan, 2025). The virtual lack of 'colonial residue naming' code in the corpus is further evidence that this reproduction takes place relatively unexamined in the policy discourse itself, thereby confirming Said's (1994) broader conclusion that imperial cultural authority continues to exist most strongly when it is most tacitly named.

Findings

The findings from the data analysis in this chapter show that the discourse of EMI policy in Pakistan constructs hierarchy at the linguistic level that can be identified and recurs in the texts in the form of the following strategies: globalist legitimation, functional bifurcation, implementation erasure, and elite/mass stratification, while colonial genealogy is not mentioned or recognized in the discourse. The findings answer both the research questions set in Chapter One and are the empirical support for the discussion and conclusion in the next chapter. Data analysis in Chapter Four yielded four main findings, all of which addressed the two research questions of this study which were, "how is the hierarchy of languages created in the discourse of

EMI policy in Pakistan" and "what are the postcolonial ideological patterns in the EMI policy texts.

The first finding of the analysis was that the Pakistani EMI policy documents consistently resort to a strategy of 'globalist legitimation' in which English is linguistically and grammatically positioned as an unmarked language which is clearly essential for participation in a globalised and competitive world order. The pattern occurred at "high" intensity in four out of the six documents that were sampled: in the National Education Policy 2009, the National Education Policy 2017–2025, the Punjab School Education Policy, and the HEC Language-in-Education Statement, which suggests that this is not just a rhetorical choice but is a stable discursive feature, one that was maintained over sixteen years of policy production.

Second, an incessant trend towards assigning instrumental value, mostly national unity or cultural cohesion, to Urdu and regional languages, and instrumental value, mostly economic opportunity, scientific competence and global competitiveness, to English was identified. This was particularly stark in the two documents rated “high” on this code, the National Education Policy 2009 and Single National Curriculum 2020–21, where the two code segments could be directly linked to the question of what specific textual mechanism(s) are used to build linguistic hierarchy instead of just asserting it.

Third, teachers, students, and communities implementing EMI policy were deleted from the grammar, which was termed as ‘implementation erasure’ in the “high” intensity in all three documents: Single National Curriculum, Punjab School Education Policy, and Balochistan SNC implementation guidance. The same finding was supported by the empirical evidence of Channa et al. (2025), who showed that SNC was being announced excluding Balochistan primary teachers from policy formulation, which is evidence of the erasure of agency that occurred in the text.

Fourth, and most important in respect of the second Research Question, "colonial residue naming" was measured as either low or non-existent in all six documents sampled. The texts sampled do not explicitly reference the history of language management in the colonies and the present day in the vast majority of cases. The absence suggests that the postcolonial worldview of the Pakistani EMI policy also functions on the basis of naturalisation, disavowal and omission as Bhabha (2019) has described the colonial discourse, and as Said (1994) has argued generally, the most effective imperial cultural power is that which is unspoken.

Overall, these findings show that Pakistani EMI policy discourse is not a reflection of the current linguistic inequality, but rather actively reproduces the inequality in ways that can be identified with a patterning of policy texts, and at the same time, hides the colonial history of this linguistic inequality. The stability of the 'elite/mass stratification' code (rated "high" or "moderate" in all six documents) also further indicates that despite the changes in the policy over the years from 2009 to 2025, the informal code of Pakistani language-in-education discourse has remained consistent, which suggests that the formal revision of the policy has not addressed the informal language-in-education discourse.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore the phenomena of linguistic imperialism and discourse colonialism in the English-medium instruction policy in Pakistan, using critical postcolonial discourse analysis. The study aimed to explore two aspects of the Pakistani EMI policy/discourse, as stated below, with the help of the theory of linguistic imperialism by Phillipson (1992), three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis model by Fairclough (2020), and the postcolonial theoretical resources from Bhabha (2019), Said (1994) and Ashcroft et al. (2022).

The Literature Review clearly revealed that the issue of Pakistani language in education has always been referred as a place of continuity in colonial discourse in the country, where several scholars such as Rahman (1996), Manan et al. (2015) and Shamim (2008) had drawn the attention of colonialist dominance of English language over Urdu and regional languages. As the review revealed however, there were two gaps in the current scholarship: first, there was generally a lack of systematic linguistic analysis of the way these hierarchies were discursively constructed in the policy texts and second, postcolonial theory, while widely used in the study of Pakistani education, has rarely been applied to specifically trace the discursive strategies used in policy text themselves.

Both gaps are covered in the Data Analysis chapter. Based on the analysis of a purposive sample of six national and provincial EMI policy texts, five recurring discourse codes were identified, and the distribution of these codes in the purposive sample was traced. The study identified five discourse codes: 'globalist legitimization,' 'functional bifurcation,' 'implementation erasure,' 'colonial residue naming,' and 'elite/mass stratification,' and traced the distribution of these across the purposive sample. The analysis showed that Pakistani EMI policy discourse is linguistically hierarchical as it achieves this through identifiable and specific ways, such as naturalising the need for English in the global context, assigning one language to instrumental value while the other to symbolic value, and grammatical deletion of human agency expected for the equitable implementation, respectively. The analysis also revealed that the discourse colonialism is more likely to be naturalised and omitted from the policy texts, as the colonial genealogy of these patterns was rarely explicit.

Theoretically and practically, these results are of importance. In terms of the theoretical context, the study is an extension of Philipson's (1992) study on linguistic imperialism beyond the broad descriptive level of the spread of English around the world to the micro level of underlying choices of grammar and lexicon in specific national policy texts, and shows how CDA and post-colonial theory can be applied to education policy research. In practice, the study reveals that the various education policy changes from 2009 to 2025 have created a remarkably consistent underlying discursive structure (even if in terms of structure and provincial implementation); and that any substantial reform of the linguistic inequality in Pakistani education will have to address not only the issue of implementation resourcing, but also the ideologies that underlie the policy language.

The study was confined to textual analysis without considering outcomes of implementation or stakeholder perceptions, which limits the extent to which the results can be interpreted as describing lived classroom experiences and instead as characterising policy discourse. The findings would be extended and tested with future research using both discourse analytic and classroom or stakeholder-perception data.

Recommendations

1. Colonial history of English medium policy needs to be explicitly referred to in official documents to facilitate informed public discussion, not a taken-for-granted.
2. The future draft of the EMI policy should provide linguistic status to Urdu and regional languages besides symbolic status to them, for instrumental opportunity.
3. Policy texts should be linguistically clear about who is involved in the implementation (e.g., teachers, districts) and avoid the use of agentless directive constructions.
4. To minimize the gap between policy and implementation, it is important to involve teacher representatives in policy development, as part of the curriculum authorities.
5. The future studies should be combined with research on stakeholder perception and be conducted at provincial level.

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